



United States Supreme Court Chief Justice

Earl Warren (1891–1974)

Chief Justice Earl Warren was Chief Justice during turbulent times in our nation's history.

Chief Justice Warren was born in Los Angeles, but grew up in Bakersfield, California, where his father worked as a railroad car repairman. He worked on the railroad himself in the summer, which left him with knowledge about working people and their problems, as well as with the anti-Asian racism then rampant on the West Coast.

Chief Justice Warren attended the University of California at Berkeley and Boalt Hall School of Law. After serving a brief stint in the army during World War I, he worked for the Office of the Alameda County District Attorney for eighteen years. During that time he proved to be a tough prosecutor, but he was also sensitive to the rights of the accused and personally fought to secure a public defender for people who could not afford one. A 1931 survey concluded that Earl Warren was the best district attorney in the United States.

From 1938 to 1942, Earl Warren was Attorney General of California and was then elected Governor. He is remembered mostly for his role in demanding the evacuation of Japanese American from the West Coast—a decision that he would later regret.

Warren served three terms as Governor of California and played a key role in Dwight Eisenhower's nomination for the presidency in 1952. President Eisenhower rewarded Earl Warren with the position of Chief Justice in 1953. He proved skillful at "massing the court" and securing consensus, as is evidenced by the unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The Warren Court took on the defense of individual rights as no court before it had done. Chief Justice Warren considered this a proper role for the courts; he never saw the role of the judiciary as passive, or somehow inferior to the other two branches of government.